

～ Taking various measures for the development of liquor business ～

Liquor products are important for fiscal management in that liquor tax is imposed on them. Since stable tax revenues can be expected from liquor products, they play an important role in the fiscal policy of the Japanese government.

The NTA is making proactive efforts for the sound development of liquor business, not to mention for realizing the proper and fair taxation of liquor tax. In order to revitalize the liquor industry and promote the exports, we are striving to promote the growth of the liquor industry, through enhancing domestic and overseas visibility as well as providing support for cultivating overseas sales channels. (Please also reference the “Sake no Shiori (the bookmark of liquor)” uploaded to the NTA website for the initiatives by the NTA.)



Sake no Shiori
[In Japanese]

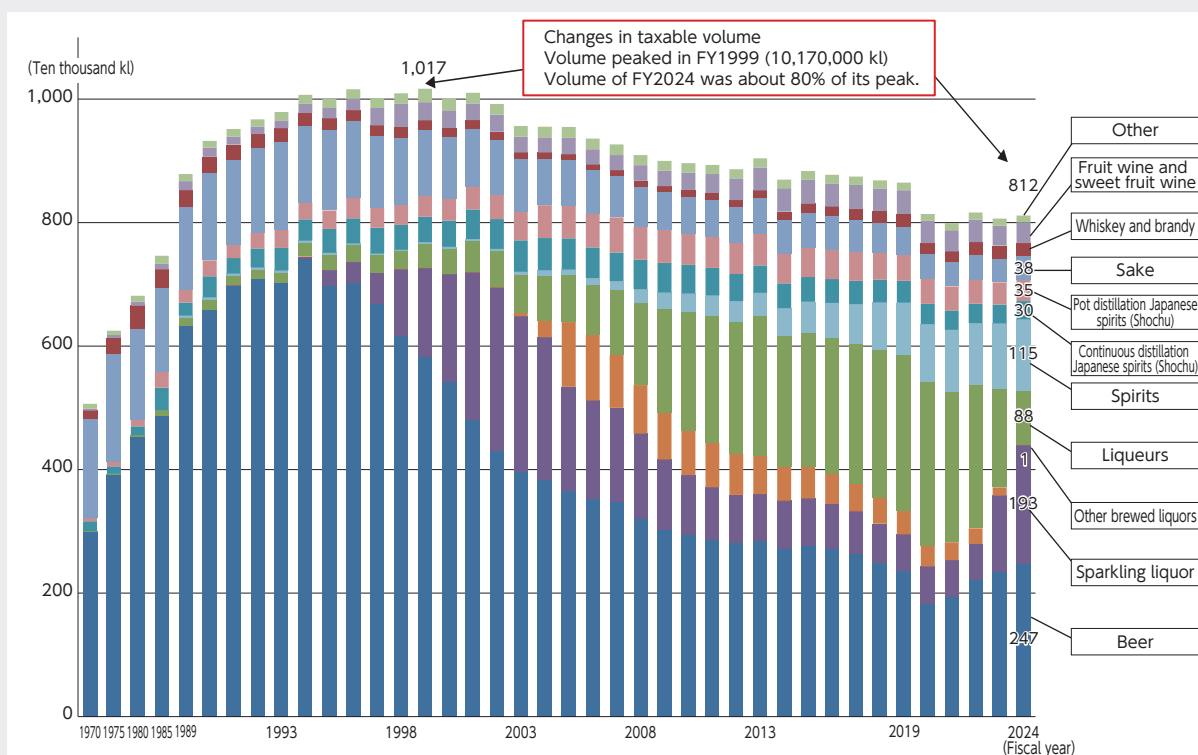
1 Situation of Liquor Industry

(1) Situation of domestic market

～ Domestic market is on a shrinking trend ～

The taxable volume of liquor has shown a declining trend since it peaked in FY1999, due to decreasing birthrate, accelerated aging, population decrease, etc.

■ Changes in taxable volume



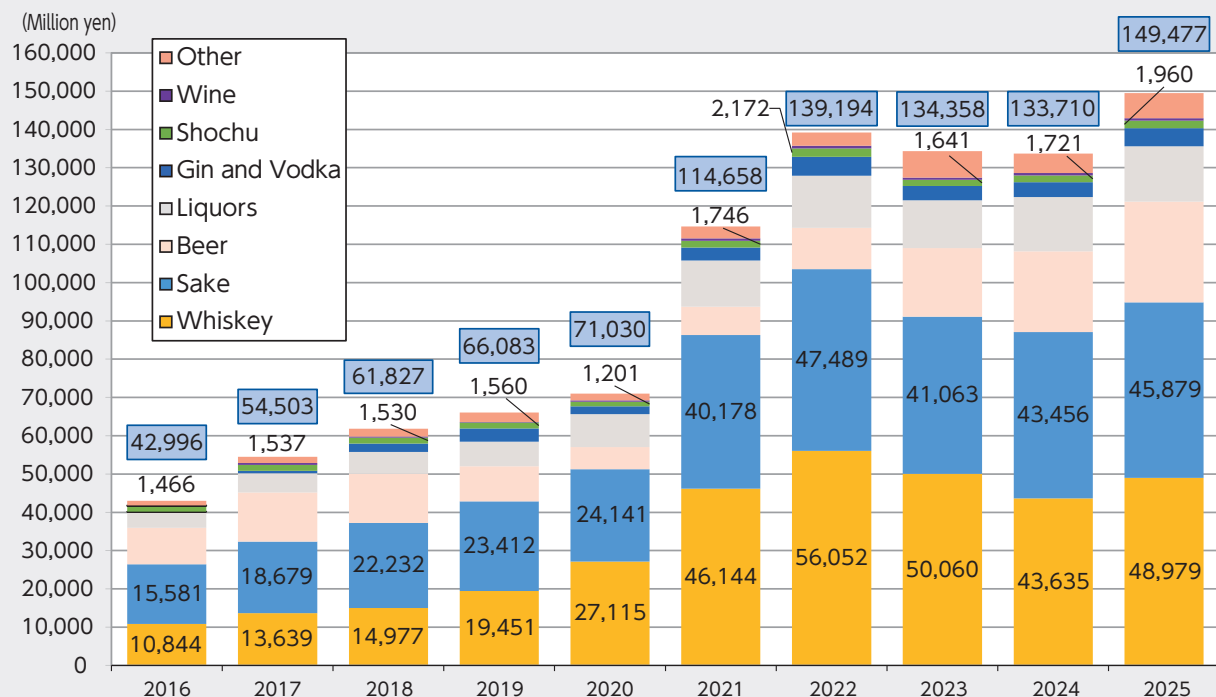
※ “Other” includes “Spirits” in 1985 and before.
(Source: National Tax Agency Annual Statistics Report)

(2) Situation of the Japan-made liquor exports

～ In 2025, exports reached a record high ～

In 2025, Japan-produced liquor exports amounted to 149.5 billion yen (11.8% increase over prior year), reaching a record high.

■ Trend in the export amount of liquor which made in Japan



Source: "Foreign Trade Statistics" by the Ministry of Finance (2025 figures were compiled using the data as of March, 2026)

2 Efforts of the NTA

(1) Promotion of the liquor industry

Given the current status and challenges, the NTA is making efforts to help the domestic and overseas liquor markets expand and help them further grow and develop in a sound manner.

～ Bring Japanese sake to overseas markets ～

In the "Implementation strategy to expand exports for agricultural, forestry and fishery products and food" (revised in May 2025), sake (refined sake), whisky, and authentic shochu/awamori are positioned as the three priority export items in the liquor category, where the target countries, targeted export value, etc. are set for each item. We help the producers cultivate sales channels and raise the visibility for Japan-produced liquor products with emphasis on the three priority items.

a. Support for cultivating overseas sales channels for Japan-produced liquor products

To further help cultivate overseas sales channels for Japanese liquor makers, we participate in large-scale overseas trade EXPOs, helping them in trade negotiations and trying to improve their product visibility through seminars. In addition, we place liquor export coordinators in various foreign countries and regions, for attending trade meetings with overseas buyers and for providing local information to Japanese liquor business operators. (Regarding liquor export coordinators, please refer to the "Placement of liquor export coordinators" section on the NTA website.)



Scene from a large EXPO



Trade meeting with overseas buyers



About the placement
of liquor export
coordinators
(in Japanese)

About the NTA

Digital Transformation
for Tax Administration

Enhancement of Services
for Taxpayers and Efficiency
of Tax Administration

Proper and Fair
Taxation and Collection

Remedy for
Taxpayer Rights

Liquor
Administration

Ensuring Proper
Administration of Services
by CPAs

Implementation of
Results Evaluation
(Evaluation of Policies)

Statistics

b. PR for attractiveness of Japanese liquor

(a) Enhancing visibility

We are implementing promotion for Japan-produced liquor products at the Japan House and inviting overseas liquor specialists to sake breweries.

(b) Efforts for dissemination and PR of "Traditional knowledge and skills of sake making with koji mold in Japan" (UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage)

In December 2024, "Traditional knowledge and skills of sake-making with koji mold in Japan" was registered as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage.

To support many people in Japan and overseas understand the history and cultural background of "Traditional knowledge and skills of sake-making with koji mold in Japan", the NTA has been promoting various domestic and international dissemination and PR activities. These include holding symposia and creating PR materials (posters, videos, etc.) in collaboration with the Agency for Cultural Affairs, the "Preservation Society of Japanese Koji-based Sake Making Craftsmanship," and other partners.



"Traditional knowledge and
skills of sake-making with koji
mold in Japan" poster



"Traditional knowledge and skills of sake-making
with koji mold in Japan" PR video



UNESCO Intangible
Cultural Heritage
Feature page for
"Traditional knowledge
and skills of sake-making
with koji mold in Japan"

※For details on our event information and PR materials (posters, videos, etc.), please visit the "About Traditional knowledge and skills of sake-making with koji mold in Japan (UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage)" page on the NTA website.

(c) Initiatives demonstrated on the site of Osaka EXPO 2025

On the site of Osaka EXPO 2025, the NTA provided visitors with the opportunities to enjoy the tasting for Japan-produced liquor products, and conducted PR activities using some infographic posters such as the "Traditional sake making," "Map of sake breweries," and "Geographical Indication (GI)" at the exhibition booth.

A lot of foreign visitors from around the world came to our booth and highly appreciated the tasting event. There were many visitors who took the pamphlets printed in foreign languages home. Also, the booth scenes were shared through SNS. This way, we succeeded in raising the visibility levels for Japan-produced liquor products.



Liquor tasting experience at EXPO Messe



Festival Station

c. Enhancing brand value for Japan-produced liquor products

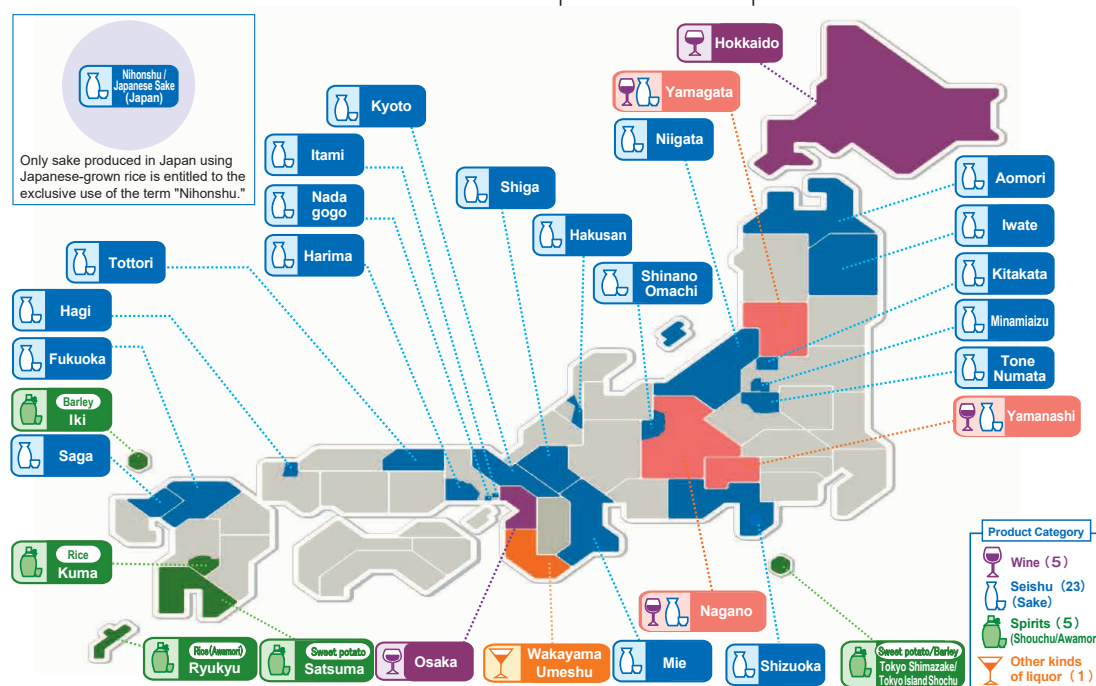
~ Expanding usage of Geographical Indications (GI)¹~

We are engaged in implementing GI designation and promoting GIs and the GI system, from the perspective of enhancing brand value of liquor products in Japan and overseas. As part of these efforts, we are producing pamphlets and hosting relevant events such as startup events and seminars (For the latest designation status, see the "information on GIs protected in Japan" on the NTA website).



Information on GIs
protected in Japan
(in Japanese)

Information on GIs protected in Japan



¹ Under the Geographical Indication (GI) system, in the case that the characteristics of a liquor product or agricultural product unique to a specific production area (quality, recognition in society, etc.) have been established, only the products that are produced within the production area and fulfills certain production standards can exclusively use the name of its production area (the name of region as a brand).

■ Information provision through SNS

Official account of Office of Liquor Business Development, International Promotion and Negotiations National Tax Agency on Instagram

@kokuzei.syurui.yusoku_official

It disseminates information on Japan-produced liquor products, with emphasis on “Traditional sake making” and GI (Geographical Indication).



Instagram
(account for
disseminating liquor
product information)



d. Subsidies for liquor business operators

For differentiating products and raising their added-value, we are helping liquor business operators foster brands, create new products, pursue overseas deployment, and hold sake brewery tourism events; we are also helping further expand exports for Japan-produced liquor products, pursue structural reforms for the liquor industry, and promote its sound growth.

Subsidies for liquor business operators

- Subsidy for liquor industry promotion and support projects (¥1.5 billion)

Supplementary budget for FY2025: ¥900 million
Budget for FY2026: ¥600 million

The subsidy is aimed at helping liquor business operators pursue proactive initiatives such as follows: promote branding for Japan-produced liquor products, promote overseas deployment like cultivation of external demand (inbound promotion in foreign countries), cultivate new markets whether domestically or overseas, etc.; also, as a result of the foregoing, it is aimed at helping expand exports for Japan-produced liquor products, promote management reforms and structural changes of the liquor industry, and promote sound growth of the liquor industry.

Past implementation status

Budget category	Subsidy name	Budget amount	Number of applications received	Number of applications adopted
Budget for FY2025	Subsidy for liquor industry promotion and support projects	¥600 million	532	240
Supplementary budget for FY2024	Subsidy for liquor industry promotion and support projects	¥700 million		
Budget for FY2024	Subsidy for liquor industry promotion and support projects	¥600 million	319	133
Supplementary budget for FY2023	Subsidy for projects to help pursue overseas deployment for Japan-produced liquor products	¥700 million	250	111
Budget for FY2023	Subsidy for projects to help cultivate new markets	¥600 million	270	155
Second supplementary budget for FY2022	Subsidy for projects to help pursue overseas deployment for Japan-produced liquor products	¥700 million	189	103
Budget for FY2022	Subsidy for projects to help pursue overseas deployment for Japan-produced liquor products	¥700 million	160	105
Supplementary budget for FY2021	Subsidy for projects to help cultivate new markets	¥800 million	313	222
Budget for FY2021	Subsidy for projects to help pursue overseas deployment for Japan-produced liquor products	¥700 million	230	109
Third supplementary budget for FY2020	Subsidy for projects to help pursue structural reforms for liquor industry	¥600 million	451	156

*Number of applications adopted includes the number of applicants who declined the adoption

Past implementation status (as of March 2026)



Initiative examples that
used subsidies for liquor
business operators
[March 2026 version]
[in Japanese]

e. International negotiations for abolishing tariffs and import restrictions

To further improve the export environment for Japanese liquor business operators, we are discussing the following through international negotiation: abolishment of tariffs and import restrictions; mutual protection of GIs; and efforts toward the mutual equivalency approval for organic alcohol beverages. Note that regarding the import restrictions imposed by certain countries on Japan-produced goods following the nuclear power plant accident at TEPCO Fukushima Dai-ichi due to the Great East Japan Earthquake, we will keep requesting the relevant governments to abolish those restrictions.

In addition, regarding the draft regulations that foreign countries and regions plan to introduce, we take necessary action not to have them become new obstacles against export of Japan-produced liquor products.

f. Technical Support

(a) Promotion of the spread of brewing technology, etc.

Each Regional Taxation Bureau has the Office of Analysis and Brewing Technology (including Chief Technical Officer of the Okinawa Regional Taxation Office) as its technological function to disseminate the research results of the National Research Institute of Brewing (NRIB), advanced technologies, etc., through such activities as giving advice and consultation in response to technical inquiries from liquor manufacturers, holding competitions, research workshops, etc., and dispatching staff to seminars, etc. held by sake-making associations, etc.

Column

4

Sake and Shochu Awards held at respective Regional Taxation Bureaus nationwide

Japanese sake and shochu are produced by applying alcoholic fermentation to the raw materials such as rice, where interaction of certain microorganisms (like koji and yeast) is instrumental. In the process, sophisticated technology is required to adequately control the impact of each year's climate and raw material quality. Aiming to further enhance such technology, each of the Regional Taxation Bureaus/Office in the whole Japan from time to time holds "Sake and Shochu Awards" targeting the Japanese sake and shochu products manufactured by the breweries under its jurisdiction.

In Sake and Shochu Awards, targeting the top-notch liquor products created by each maker using its unique liquor making technology, their quality is compared in the sensory evaluation process, and awards are given to the makers of excellent technology. Also, component analysis is carried out for the products, and the results thereof are returned to respective makers. We are aware this step contributes to improving the manufacturing technology and the liquor product quality; and ultimately to sound growth of the liquor industry.

Respective division covering Sake and Shochu Awards is structured depending on the regional characteristics. For example, regarding Japanese sake, they sometimes have separate sections for ginjo sake, junmai sake, and warmed sake respectively. In addition, since the Regional Taxation Bureaus in Tokyo, Fukuoka, and Kumamoto are in the areas where shochu manufacturing is prosperous, each of them has Authentic Shochu Division. Also, the Okinawa Regional Taxation Office holds awamori-dedicated Sake and Shochu Awards.



A scene from sensory evaluation



Results of Sake and Shochu Awards held at each Regional Taxation Bureau

(b) Support for the quality and safety of liquor

With the aim of ensuring the safety of liquor in all stages from liquor production to consumption and enhancing the level of quality, we give technological assistance concerning improvement etc. in the production process of liquor and confirm safety through actions including research and provision of information on the radioactive substances of liquor.

(c) Efforts by the National Research Institute of Brewing (NRIB)

As the technical backbone of the NTA to fulfill its mission, the National Research Institute of Brewing (NRIB, an independent administrative agency) is conducting advanced analyses and appraisals for alcoholic beverages. In addition, it is pursuing the following: "Research activities for enhancing the added value and diversifying the range of alcoholic beverages (e.g., research on raw materials and production methods, the relationship between human preference and quality of products, and compositional characteristics of Japanese distilled spirits)" to support the expansion of exports of Japan-produced alcoholic beverages, and "Research activities for clarifying the characteristics of microorganisms and raw materials used in production of alcoholic beverages" to strengthen the technological foundation.

In addition, for the inheritance of traditional sake brewing and the promotion of the alcoholic beverage industry, NRIB has provided training courses for the production of alcoholic beverages and conducted Sake and Shochu Awards for more than 100 years since the Meiji Period, fostering technical personnel engaged in alcoholic beverage manufacturing.

Moreover, as the only national research institute in Japan, NRIB works closely with the Offices of Analysis and Brewing Technology of the Regional Taxation Bureaus to promote accurate scientific knowledge about Japanese alcoholic beverages and provide clear and accessible information both in Japan and abroad.

g. Measures for small-and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

In order for the liquor industry, of which SMEs account for the majority, to adjust to change in the social and economic conditions properly, the NTA supports diverse efforts by the industrial associations, such as the modernization project by the Japan Sake & Shochu Makers Association. Moreover, in coordination with institutions of related government offices and organizations, local governments and others, the NTA provides business operators and industrial associations with information on governmental measures for SMEs (consultation desks, subsidies, the tax system, financing, etc.) to promote the use of these measures.

Responses to current challenges facing the liquor industry

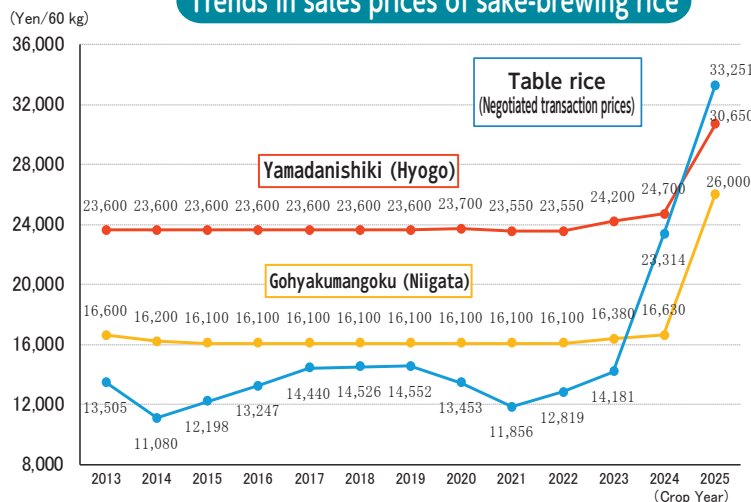
1 Response to soaring rice prices

In FY2025, Following the continued rise in table rice prices that began in FY2024, prices of sake-brewing rice also rose sharply. In addition, the production volume of sake-brewing rice declined as some sake-brewing rice farmers shifted to growing table rice. As a result, difficulties arose in procuring sake-brewing rice, having a significant impact on sake breweries' operations. In light of these circumstances, the NTA has worked to publicize and promote the use of various support measures available to sake breweries. Specifically, these measures include:

- “Emergency Credit Guarantee Program in Response to Soaring Rice Prices” provided by the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association, and loan programs offered by the Japan Finance Corporation
- Support for sake breweries through the use of the “Temporary Grant for Focused Support of Local Revitalization in Response to Rising Prices” provided by local governments

In addition, as a measure to secure sufficient sake-brewing rice from FY2026 onward, the NTA supports initiatives by sake brewers' associations and other organizations aimed at strengthening collaboration between sake breweries and sake-brewing rice farmers (under the FY2025 supplementary budget).

Trends in sales prices of sake-brewing rice



Liquor business operators
affected by soaring raw
material rice prices
[in Japanese]

Note 1: The prices of sake-brewing rice are the sales prices of first-grade rice, based on information obtained from the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association.

Note 2: Table rice prices (negotiated transaction prices) are the annual average prices of first-grade rice from the beginning of marketing through October of the following year (for the 2025 crop, preliminary figures from the beginning of marketing through April 2026). The prices include packaging and transportation costs, but exclude consumption tax equivalent amounts.

(Source) “Situation Surrounding Sake-Brewing Rice” (Prepared by MAFF, May 2026)

2 Responses to the U.S. tariff measures

The U.S. is one of the major export destinations for Japan-produced liquor products. However, tariff measures introduced since April 2025 have resulted in liquor products exported from Japan to the U.S. being subject to higher tariff rates than before, raising concerns about the potential impact on exports.

In August 2025, in light of the Prime Minister's instruction, the NTA held briefing sessions at Regional Taxation Bureaus nationwide for liquor business operators engaged in efforts to export liquor products to the U.S. The NTA also held opinion-exchange meetings in each regional block jointly with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), and worked to alleviate business operators' concerns and identify their needs. In addition, the NTA is expanding support for exhibiting at large-scale trade fairs and prioritizing applications under subsidy programs for liquor business operators, thereby supporting efforts to develop sales channels in various countries, including the U.S., and diversify export destinations. The NTA will continue to provide support tailored to the needs of liquor business operators.



A scene from an opinion exchange meeting jointly held by the NTA, METI, and MAFF in the Hokkaido block



Liquor business operators
affected by the U.S. tariff
measures
[in Japanese]

(2) Establish a fair trade environment, respond to other social requests

a. Establishment of a fair-trading environment for liquor products

The NTA legislated and announced the “Standards for the Fair Trading of Liquor¹” (hereinafter the “Standards”; revised in March 2022) in March 2017, based on the Act on Securing Liquor Tax and on Liquor Business Associations; and we have been disseminating the content of the Standards and pursuing relevant enlightenment activities.

Also, in July 2023, the NTA started a new initiative of further disseminating the Standards and promoting relevant enlightenment as well as of sending inquiry documents for the purpose of encouraging operators to spontaneously review whether their pricing complies with the Standards or not. In addition, the NTA continues to conduct market reality surveys on the status of liquor trading, issue instructions when having found any non-compliant transactions, and secure fair trading while collaboration with the Japan Fair Trade Commission, too.

b. Response to social demands

(a) Measures against Health Problems Caused by Alcohol

Considering the “Basic Plan for Promoting Measures against Health Problems Caused by Alcohol” (the third plan, from April 2026 to March 2031) formulated based on the “Basic Act on Measures to Prevent Damage to Health due to Alcohol” enforced in June 2014 and the “Guidelines on Drinking Paying Attention to Health” prepared by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in February 2024, etc., the NTA is implementing initiatives for preventing occurrence of health problems due to alcohol in collaboration with relevant institutions and industry associations.

(b) Measures to prevent those under the age of 20 from consuming alcohol

With the purpose to prevent consuming alcohol under the age of 20, in addition to preparation of educational posters and pamphlets, the NTA designates every April as the “Month to emphasize prevention from consuming alcohol under the age of 20,” and carries out enlightenment activities in coordination with relevant institutions and the industrial associations.



Awareness Poster
(for Display at Government Offices
and Other Public Institutions)



Awareness Poster
(for Display in Stores)

(c) Promotion of resource recycling

The beer industry promotes the “Action Plan for Achieving a Low-carbon Society (Carbon Neutrality Action Plan)” which was formulated based on the “Plan for Global Warming Countermeasures” (determined by the Cabinet in October 2021). The Liquor Subcommittee under the National Tax Council conducts evaluation and verification of such endeavors.

¹ These standards need to be complied with by all liquor companies (production, wholesale, and retail) to ensure fair transactions for liquor products. In other words: ① it is not allowed to sell liquor products at a price lower than the total costs of sale on a continuous basis without a justifiable reason; and ② it is not allowed to execute a deal that might be significantly detrimental to the own liquor business or to the liquor business of other liquor companies. Note that it is prescribed that the fair trade standards need to be reviewed approximately every five years and that when recognized necessary, they need to be revised.